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# THE MINIATURE LADY

Continued from page 6

dressing-room. She carried a new cabinet-  
sized card in her hand. Romney ad-  
mitted her, and held his breath.

"Now, do I look older?" Lalia asked  
in a straightforward way, holding out  
the card. "Do I look 'teacherified'?"

Never did John Alden look at a sweeter,  
more demure little Priscilla, than Romney  
Faulks saw in Lalia Bart. All she  
needed to complete the Puritan maiden  
was a white cap and kerchief. She had  
parted her hair and brought it down  
over each temple, across the tips of her  
ears, and twisted it in a knot at the base  
of her head. Her black waist was re-  
lieved only by a tiny white-linen collar  
turned over the black band at her throat.

Romney took the card. It was indeed  
a Priscilla who looked up at him in the  
stiffest, primmest little pose that ever  
made a bewitching girl quaint.

"Do I not look like a veritable 'school-  
marm'?" asked Lalia again, with an  
anxious ring in her voice.

"More so, more so," muttered Romney,  
gazing at the photograph.

"Now I'll take the other, please,"  
Lalia went on, sweeping her long skirt  
toward the desk.

"Oh, yes," said Romney, suddenly  
waking up. He rummaged through  
drawer after drawer; but no photograph  
appeared. Then he rubbed his forehead  
thoughtfully. "Strange where I've mis-  
laid that," he mused, but did not meet  
her eyes.

"Never mind," said the miniature  
woman. "I can get it another time. Is—  
there any position in prospect?" she  
faltered.

Romney looked embarrassed. "Why,  
no—that is, I wrote to a principal in  
Haven, old friend of mine, about you,  
and he—"

Lalia sat down suddenly, and em-  
phasized her demand with an extended  
forefinger. "Professor Faulks, just what  
did he say? This is business, and I have  
a right to all that those principals say  
about me. That is his letter," with  
unerring instinct pointing at an envelop  
that Faulks was trying to cover with his  
arms. "Read it to me, please."

Romney slowly opened the letter,  
frowning. "I wrote to this man that I  
thought you could command, if an oppor-  
tunity was offered you."

"And what does he say about the  
opportunity?" demanded the girl quickly.

Romney fingered the letter uncertainly.  
"I'll just tell you what he says, because  
the language is rather—"

"Read it!" commanded the diminutive  
woman. "No matter what it is, read it."

And Romney, with a queer expression  
on his face, read: "Great Scott, Faulks!  
what do you think of me? I'm trying to  
hire a teacher, not adopt a child. Don't  
talk to me about the 'essence of woman-  
liness' and all that rot. If you've got a  
senior up there who looks twenty-five  
and tips the scales at a decent figure  
and can awe a six-foot boy into silence  
at one glance, trot her out."

Romney folded the letter, slowly oc-  
cupying himself with it for a long while.  
The silence in the room was disturbed  
by a single sound. It was because of that  
sound that Romney took unlimited pains  
with the folds of the letter.

Finally he looked up and said gently:  
"Miss Bart, have you thought of a po-  
sition as governess? I know of such a  
position, and it seems to me that you  
would be eminently fitted—"

Lalia interrupted quietly: "No, Pro-  
fessor Faulks, I want a school-room all  
to myself, with live boys and girls in it.  
I don't want one little cooped-up hot-  
house plant to tend. This is only the first  
failure." Her voice grew strong and  
buoyant. "I shall not surrender until  
next June. Perhaps," hopefully, but  
still with a little catch in her voice,  
"when you send this photograph out  
with my application, those principals  
will not be reminded of a child, but of a  
director of children."

A few days later Romney called around

at the Alpha Gamma chapter-house. It  
was Saturday morning, exactly the time  
that he ought not to have called. A  
maid left him standing in the hall while  
she went up-stairs in search of Lalia.  
Romney sauntered down the hall to the  
library—exactly the place he ought to  
have avoided, thought a small senior clad  
in a short skirt, her head crowned by  
a dusting-cap and her dress protected  
by a big apron.

"I beg pardon— Oh, Miss Bart!" ex-  
claimed Professor Faulks, stopping short  
at sight of Lalia standing on the second  
shelf of a bookcase dusting the top row  
of books.

And, "Oh, Professor Faulks!" in a  
half-vexed, half-amused tone. "I'm go-  
ing to stand right here and finish this  
row," speaking over her shoulder, "and  
then I want you to make yourself  
useful as well as ornamental. Can  
you?"

"Far more useful than ornamental,  
ma'am. At your service," said Romney,  
pulling his mustache in delight.

He cast his hat into a corner, seized a  
big calico cloth lying on the floor and  
stepped up to the bookcase. "Let me  
help you," he begged, the big-boy nature  
in him responding to the little-girl nature  
in Lalia, who could not summon a bit of  
dignity, clinging to a shelf and arrayed  
like a maid.

She turned a flushed, smiling face on  
Romney. "I'm away above you at  
last!" she cried, looking down in his face  
upturned near her own.

"You're that any day," he laughed,  
"up so high I don't dare reach for you.  
Now," quickly changing his tone, "along  
what line do you want me to be trans-  
formed from the ornamental to the use-  
ful?"

"Along the highest line of dust away  
up there on top," gasped Lalia, pushing  
her dust cloth among the books.

"That support won't hold us both,  
will it?" asked Romney testing the  
second shelf.

"Not at all," retorted the miniature  
lady, "it takes so much more to support  
a man than a woman."

For half an hour, a delicious half-hour  
to the professor of history, the two  
worked and laughed together, its being  
Lalia's turn to assist the maid in her  
Saturday's dusting. At last the small  
senior stopped, feather-duster in air.

"Have you heard of any other positions  
for teachers, Professor Faulks?"

"Yes," he said hesitatingly, "I brought  
the letters along to see whether you wish  
to apply. Here's one." He sat down  
beside the window and drew an envelop  
out of his pocket. "This is from a  
principal up the Hudson—private school.  
He writes to state requirements: 'She  
must be an experienced teacher, near  
thirty, a good conversationalist, cal-  
culated in all respects to be a model for  
girls, decidedly tall without being in the  
least angular, graceful and attractive  
without being a flirt.' Do you wish to

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